



GRACE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

90th Anniversary

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA 1883-1973

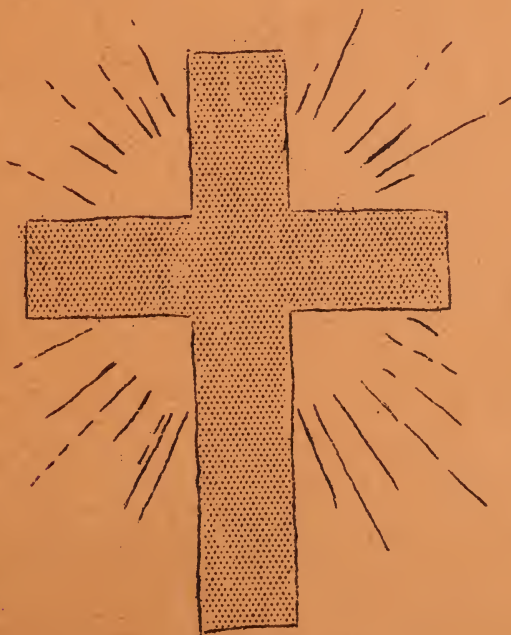


These pages are dedicated to those faithful and courageous men and women of yesterday who organized and perpetuated Grace United Church of Christ:

To the pastors and their families who gave so much of their time, energy, devotion and spiritual sacrifice as true shepherds of the flock;

To the present membership who by its material gifts, services and the help of God is maintaining a place of worship for present and future generations;

To those of the future who will move forward together and by the Grace of God sustain a greater Church for the Glory of His Kingdom.





STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being
creates man in his own image
and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

He calls us into his Church
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship
to be his servants in the service of men,
to proclaim the gospel to all the world
and resist the powers of evil,
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
his presence in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

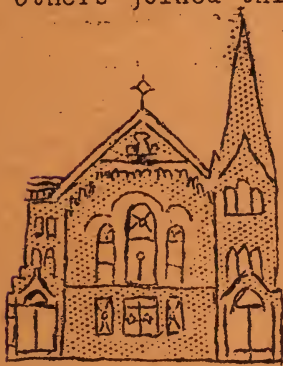
Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him.

Amen.

HISTORY OF GRACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ninety years ago a small group of people from the Reformed Church desired to have worship services conducted in the English language instead of German. The Board of Home Missions of the Ohio Synod listened to their request and sent Reverend T. G. Bacher to Fort Wayne in January 1883 to work with them.

The Reverend Mr. Bacher and this small group held their first service in a former Jewish Synagogue on Harrison Street on April 1, 1883. On Pentecost Sunday, May 13, 1883, seventeen members renewed their faith under the new English services. Thirteen others joined this group by confession of faith and twenty transferred their membership from other churches. These fifty people organized a congregation called Grace Reformed Church.



In 1884 a chapel was built on the rear of a lot on Washington Boulevard, East of Barr Street. A Parsonage was built in 1889 on newly purchased property adjoining the chapel.

Work on the erection of a downtown church building was started in 1894. This new Grace Reformed Church was dedicated in April, 1895. The building was recarpeted and redecorated and a new pipe organ installed in 1912. In the late teens or early twenties, the kitchen facilities were enlarged and a new heating plant installed. Parsonage and Sunday School facilities were also improved during this time.

Grace Reformed Church held its Fortieth Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, October 14, 1923 by looking back on its forty years of dedicated service to God and looking ahead with a renewal of faith, courage, and love.

In the spring of 1925 the congregation took favorable action toward relocating in some part of the city where there might be greater opportunity for growth and service. In June 1926, the present property at the corner of Lexington and Webster was purchased for \$7,900. Ground was broken for the new church in July of 1927. The corner stone was laid on Sunday afternoon, July 31, 1927 with appropriate ceremonies. On Sunday morning, February 5, 1928 a beautiful house of worship was dedicated to the Glory of God and the honor of Christ. Reverend Paul Leinbach, D. D. gave three inspiring messages during the day. Splendid musical programs were rendered at each service. The March issue of the Reformed Church paper stated that "About 300 persons were in the first church service; 200 came to the Lord's Table. A number of classes reached the 100% mark in church attendance."

The Grace Reformed Church celebrated its Golden Anniversary with inspiring services October 8th - 15th, 1933. The week was featured by a Home Coming of the Church School, a Fraternal Service, an Anniversary Reception, a Musical Service and the Golden Anniversary Service.

The depression of the 1930's found the church burdened with a \$70,000 debt. The church was saved by the heroic and consecrated leadership of Pastor B. E. Riemsnyder and the supreme sacrifices of some of its members.

With the unification of all Reformed and Evangelical Churches in 1934 the name of Grace Reformed Church became Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church.

A rehabilitation program was begun in 1952. A dedicatory service was held



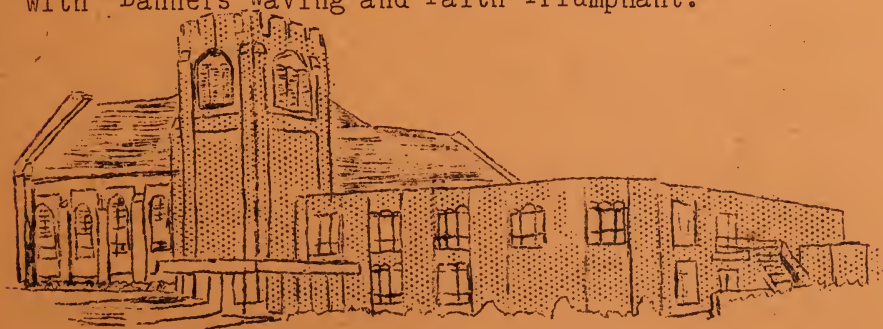
November 7, 1954 celebrating the work program of the 1952 - 54 period.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church merged in June 1957 to become the United Church of Christ.

Grace United Church of Christ celebrated its 75th Anniversary on Sunday, May 18, 1958 with a rich devotional service in the sanctuary during the morning worship service, a noon-day Pot-luck Dinner and fellowship hour following the worship service and a stirring pageant sponsored by the Youth Fellowship of the Church.

The late B. E. Reemsnyder, former pastor, favored the congregation by his presence and fellowship for several days, being the guest pastor on Sunday, May 11 and by reading the scripture lesson at the worship service on May 18, (Ephesians 1:15- 23 and Psalm 122). The Reverend Frank J. Lowenbergh, former pastor added strength and inspiration to his listeners at the May 18th worship service by presenting the morning message, "A Word of Wisdom From the Past, For the Future."

The evening pageant, "The House of Our Faith," was sponsored by the Youth Fellowship and directed by Miss Donna Schlegelmilch, a member of the Church and Dramatics Teachers of the FWCS. Mrs. Edward Drews, wife of Pastor Drews was the Narrator. "The House of Faith", written by Miss Schlegelmilch depicted the high-lights of the progress and the adventures of the 75-year-old Grace Church. It closed with "Banners Waving and Faith Triumphant."



In such a spirit Grace United Church of Christ moved into another twenty-five years of service with plans for the expansion of the church property to provide more facilities for the church school and related church activities. A Building Fund was established. Faith, courage and sacrifice bore fruit. The cornerstone for the new facility was laid October 27, 1968. The new addition was dedicated on May 18, 1969.

May, 1969 was a month of dedication featured by a Personal Dedication Sunday, May 11; Dedication Sunday, May 18th; Musical Praise Service, May 22; and Education for Missions, May 25. Reverend Clyde Flannery, Associate Minister of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference gave the Dedicatory Message, "Being Adequate Christians", during the Community Service of Dedication at 2:30, May 18th. Reverend Frank Lansing Executive Secretary of the Associated Churches read the scripture lesson.

Visitors and members alike were pleased to view a new \$450,000 addition including very adequate church school facilities, an elevator and a covered rear entrance to aid the aged and physically handicapped, a library with a capacity for 2,500 books, nursery and kindergarten rooms with heated floors, spacious lobby and interior staircase, luxurious carpeting, with sanctuary and all rooms air-conditioned. Other attractive and functional units visited were a youth area with a kitchenette, a lounge providing a place for receptions, group meetings, informal discussions and relaxation, a new kitchen with modern equipment, and a properly located, well equipped pastor's study.

Self-sacrifice and generous giving on the part of the membership has now reduced the building debt to approximately \$94,000.



MUSIC IN GRACE CHURCH

We learn from the scripture that our true purpose for being is to praise God. Music in various forms and degrees has been, and is, one of the means of praising God since the very beginning of

the Church. We read of the use of instruments and of David's singing in the Old Testament.

Grace Church has been graciously blessed over the years by having various choral groups; the adult Chancel Choir, the Youth Choir, the Children's Choir and the Expressionaires. The benefits have been two fold. The Church in its corporate worship has been led and stimulated; and the participants have had a deeper and more meaningful experience.

The Church has been fortunate in having organ music as a part of its worship service since the purchase of its first organ in 1912. God led the congregation to purchase our beautiful Schantz Pipe Organ in 1954. It is possible for the great masters in the area of music to communicate the rich experiences of past eras to our congregation with the use of this organ. Its musical message makes possible a means of communication between hearts and minds of interested listeners.

Grace Church has made wise and adequate use of the Church Hymnal. Hymn singing is the area of church music in which everyone can take part. Its use preserves the motivating experiences of the gifted and inspired Saints from the past to the present. It keeps alive our rich musical heritage as well as introducing and using music of a more recent era.

Grace Church has been abundantly blessed in having choir directors and organists of ability, good taste and dedication. They have abundantly enriched our lives in worship services and in many special events.

TAPE RECORDING

The tape recording of the Worship Services in Grace Church was originated in 1951 by Miss Ethel Johnson. It has been carried on continuously since that time. Miss Johnson, assisted by her committee has taken and played our Sunday Morning Worship Services to our sick and shut-in for the past twenty-two years. This is indeed a unique program which has enriched the lives of hundreds of people. It is absurd to attempt to measure its harvest.

THE CHURCH SCHOOL



All Pastors of Grace Church, the leadership of the church and its members have believed in and fostered a Church School program. One year after the organization of the church a chapel was erected and provided facilities for the new Sunday School.

After the Webster Street site was purchased in 1926, a Church School was organized in the new vicinity and instruction was offered in a rented area of Harrison Hill School. At the same time the Church School Program continued at the downtown

location. The two schools combined their efforts in developing a Christmas Program in 1926 which was presented in the auditorium at Harrison Hill School.

The present Church School Program provides a strong program of teaching God's word by an excellent instructional staff with adequate facilities in a new building.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Grace Church, believing in a teaching ministry, has conducted a two week Vacation Bible School program, reaching not only the unchurched children and youth, but also crossing many denominational lines. Attendance in recent years has peaked the 140 mark with a teaching staff of over 30 dedicated leaders, touching nearly 175 lives with this ministry. In order to reach all ages, from 3 years of age thru 9th grade, both morning and evening sessions are held.

THE WOMEN'S GUILD

Women have always played an important and integral part in the spiritual and work life of Grace Church. Ninety years ago, the women of the church organized "The Ladies Aid and Missionary Society" with seventeen members. As a result of the church merger in 1942 its name was changed to the "Women's Guild".



The Women's Guild, with the help of God, attempts to unite all the women in Christian Fellowship, to deepen spiritual life and to promote Christian Service in and out of the Church.

WEEKDAY NURSERY SCHOOL

Early in 1969, a committee was appointed by the Consistory to investigate the possibility of having a weekday nursery school at Grace Church.

In March of 1969 the committee made a favorable report and recommended that a weekday nursery school be established.

On Monday, September 8, 1969, doors were opened to a charter class of sixteen children meeting on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings.

In September, 1972, a class for three-year-olds was offered.

This fall, 1973, it was necessary to expand to two classes for four-year-olds in addition to the class for three-year-olds.

Thus far, Grace United Church of Christ Nursery School has enrolled 102 children, representing eighty-eight homes. Established as a venture in faith in 1969, the experience of four years prove beyond doubt that this self-supporting school has fulfilled a

real need for children of pre-school age. It has been a real privilege to promote and maintain this Christian Ministry to children in the name of the Master Teacher who loved children so much.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Many other organizations within the Church give equal and additional opportunity for Christian Growth and service, Christian fellowship and wholesome relaxation. Rich experiences can be garnered in the framework of the Youth Fellowship, White Cross Guild, Young-in-Heart Club, Girl Scouts, Church Committees, and Church School Teaching work, Consistory and Christ Centered Campaigns such as our God's Share Program and Key 73.

IT IS WRITTEN!

Ninety years of dreams, hard work, dedicated service, sacrifice of human and financial resources have given us a rich spiritual and material heritage. In the language of Romans 12, there have been members of Grace Church who had faith enough to receive a message from God. People who had a gift of serving others, served them well. Some offered comfort to the sorrowing with Christian cheer. Others served the Lord enthusiastically. Many loved each other with brotherly affection and took delight in honoring each other. Pastors preached sermons that were strong and helpful.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Grace Church will be celebrating its 100th birthday in ten years. Will the next ten years add to the heritage of the membership of 1983?

If we also can have the faith to hear the Lord and act on His Message, we can make a fruitful contribution to the heritage accumulated through the years. The next ten years will be less burdensome if we can believe God's Word in Isaiah 43:1-2. "Don't be afraid for I have ransomed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When

you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up - the flames will not consume you".

The road to 1983 will be less difficult if we remember God's Word in Psalm 133:1. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity".

PASTORS

Reverend T. J. Bacher	1883 - 1888
Reverend A. K. Zartman	1888 - 1916
Reverend Nevin Schaaf	1916 - 1922
Reverend J. H. String	1922 - 1925
Reverend R. S. Beaver	1925 - 1931
Reverend B. E. Reemsnyder	1931 - 1946
Reverend John W. Heistand	1946 - 1949
Reverend F. J. Lowenbergh	1949 - 1956
Reverend Edward W. Drews	1956 - 1962
Reverend Marvin Deerhake	1963 -

"And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding".....Jeremiah 3:15

90th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SCHEDULE

Anniversary Dinner

Thursday, September 27, 1973-6:15 P.M.

Musical Program

September 27, 1973-8:00 P.M.

ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, September 30, 1973

10:45 A.M.

Rev. John Heistand, Speaker

YOUTH RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

Sunday, September 30, 1973

2:00 P.M.

CONSISTORY 1973

Rev. Marvin W. Deerhake, Pastor

Elders

William Hebermehl

Thomas Talbert

William Good

Floyd Johnson - President

Wallace Sterling-V. Pres.

Elroy Miller

Deacons-Deaconesses

Harry Brown.

Ruth Doctor

Robert Striker

Mary Dillon - Treasurer

Dennis Durnell

James Cunningham-Fin. Sec.

Duetta Davis - Secretary

Eugene Mann

Dale Masel

90th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

J. Wilbur Haley, Chr.

Mr. & Mrs. Homer Fry

Mr. & Mrs. Douglas McConnell

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Ruhl

Kurt & Karen Kauffman

Hazel Brown

Lyda Wiedelman

Mr. & Mrs. Elroy Miller

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